

I've always been interested in architecture. I remember doing drawings of houses with porches around them, improved houses, at thirteen or so. I also devised a great scheme, ideal and utopian: *social, political, urban, and rural, all at once*. Every family – this was the end of the 1930s – would have about fifty acres, depending on the usefulness of the land, with a house, one much more intelligent than those I knew. Each family would be within fifty miles of several businesses and factories, one or more modest governments – servitors and coordinators, not Governments – one or more universities, and one or more facilities for shopping and entertainment. I realized that it would be hard to calculate the overlying grids. Most people would be nearer than fifty miles. Except for the fifty acres each, such a distribution has occurred randomly in dense countries such as the Netherlands. More intended, I suppose, is the maintenance there of the farmland. Before, in Omaha, I was critical of the Joslyn Memorial, the city museum under construction, for being a Roman villa in Nebraska. I was scornful of the military monument opposite the Union Station in Kansas City, also constructed in the 1930s. It has an "Eternal Flame" on top of a tower designed in the usual combination of Gothic and cubist. Its one-story pedestal is decorated with reliefs, somewhat Egyptian, of simple soldiers and sailors slightly geometricized. These structures are examples – especially the monument, the museum is better – of the public style in the 1920s and 1930s in the United States, called fascist in Europe.

While I was in the army in 1947, helping to occupy Korea, before going to college, my assignment to myself was to decide between being an architect or an artist, which to me was being a painter. Art was the most likely in the balance, but the decisive weight was that in architecture it was necessary to deal with the clients and the public. This seemed impossible to me, as did the business of a firm.

This thinking assumes a society too difficult to deal with. It also assumes that doing something of your own is long and

difficult and that it is basically done alone. For the worse, I think this is the nature of the situation then as well as now. However, I've been around a while and tend to think that I know what I'm doing. In a small way I've built structures steadily, daily, for over twenty years. The activities of art and architecture can be defined in many ways. For myself and others in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s art had to be defined as art itself, only itself, in order to be developed. The social systems and their wars had demolished the earlier efforts toward more general thinking. I have no trouble in maintaining my original alienation, but I think given the choice we would prefer that our work have some effect upon others. I've always questioned the design of what I've seen and I've always designed (I don't like the word "design" – it sounds like an application, an imposition) the things and spaces around me. Between this experience and the forcible incorporation of my work into the art and museum business, I am, despite the beginning, somewhat in public.

As I said, the systems and the wars destroyed the relationship of art and architecture, as they did that between most aspects of the society. Wars benefit central governments and the ensuing strong central governments are jealous of rivals, certainly in combination, especially "culture." The situation in the Soviet Union since the revolution is that all things should be asked of the top and all things received from the top. Ivan Grozny wanted this too.¹ The United States Government has similar aspirations, well along, and in place of perfection does its best to divide everything. The interests of any community are smashed into pieces by the requirements of the Government. The fear of culture is actually a little cheerful. It means a little involvement, some importance, and a little power in a good way, more so in the Soviet Union than in the United States. Culture makes them nervous. Hermann Göring said, "When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my revolver."

I consider the attempted coherence, more breadth than coherence, of De Stijl, the Bauhaus, and the Constructivists as live, as normal, and not oppressive. It's the separation and isolation that are oppressive, the exclusivity of specialists in all kinds of design, their rote appeal to rules learned by rote, their behavior as merchants in control of a market. The three groups did something tremendous. They didn't impose their work upon the world. On the contrary everyone used and debased their designs. I once went aboard the old *Queen Mary* or *Elizabeth* to visit Jack Wesley and Hannah Green before they sailed. One large salon was laid with linoleum that had a design taken from Mondrian. The floor cost more than the four hundred dollars that Sidney Janis paid Mondrian for *Trafalgar Square*. It's not thought that is an imposition, it's mediocrity, the consequence of very little thought, of the easy way out, that is imposed upon the world. Convention and the easiest thing to do – usually not even cheaper, just easier – determine the appearance of the world. I'm not arguing, incidentally, for a confusion of art and architecture, a fashion now, but for a coherent relationship.

Therefore, within the capacity of one person or of a small group, the relationship of all visible things should be considered. Second: imitating Vitruvius, whom Alberti thought sloppy, all visible things are important. As in art, contrary to some, there are no public and private types, nor in architecture should there be. The difference between buildings is in the function, not in the "style," and in whether they are big or small, not in whether they are grand or modest. Buildings may have a certain panache, but not according to their social standing. This idea applies also to expense, which can mean care and special materials, to either costly or cheap buildings. There is nothing wrong with cheap buildings. In fact saving money could be called a "function" to consider, which is Three: the particulars of architecture are not a nuisance, but sources of good architecture. Failures of common sense are

also aesthetically disagreeable, such as a waste of money or a disregard for the site. The main plan can arise from considering the site, either as terrain, as nature, or as existing streets and buildings. Materials vary from place to place; local ones are cheaper, are usually better suited to the climate, and those doing the work know how to use them. They are used to a certain way of building and this is hard to fight. Ordinarily if any of these considerations are ignored, the city, the building, the utensil look like impositions. All of these factors, again, are not limits but interesting considerations from which new ideas for buildings arise. Four: this is also true for the function of a building, one thing which separates architecture from art. Consideration of the function is enjoyable. It's not in the way of being creative – it's against "creative," a present delusion and one in the past as well. Faujas de Saint-Fond is quoted saying of factories in 1797: "*L'architecture est une peste pour ces sortes d'établissement!*"² I say that about museums. Form may not closely follow function, but my axiom is that form should never violate the function. "Forms" for their own sake, despite function, are ridiculous. One reason art museums are so popular with architects, and so bizarre, is that they must think there is no function, the clients too, since to them art is meaningless. Museums have become an exaggerated, distorted, and idle expression for their architects, most of whom are incapable of "expression." The only decent museums that I've seen are the ones by Louis Kahn.

Five: "Small Is Beautiful." Never make anything (politically as well) bigger than necessary. Perversely, the works of art in big museums are crammed together. Six, which should have been first: new land should not be built upon. There are exceptions, but this is an easier rule to observe than is thought. Cities in the United States sprawl, but even in Europe, even in Japan, the land could be more rigorously conserved. And existing structures should be saved, "important" and "unimportant" alike, even to a cost beyond that of a new building.

Seven: all buildings and cities should be agreeable and liveable. Almost none are so of the last thirty years. The reason for this can only be not knowing how to live well. Obviously this applies most to those with money and power. Eight: as "*klein ist schön*," so is simple. Part of the present "expression" and "creativity" is an extreme complication of parts. Complication has become a symbol of importance, as with the museums. As to simplicity, to me symmetry is the given and asymmetry is the exception, caused only by reasonable particulars, such as the site or the function. And to have simplicity and symmetry, proportion is crucial; we see simple proportions. Much of the quality of a structure lies in these. The scale results from these. The remaining eighty-seven theses come later.

Now, as to actual construction, I did what I could with a very cold, cold-water railroad flat on Twenty-Seventh Street near Second Avenue in New York City. Later, I divided and organized a loft on Nineteenth Street and Park Avenue, at the last with regard to the installation of my own work and of others that was accumulating. Then in November 1968 I bought a cast-iron building on the corner of Spring and Mercer Streets. It was built in 1870 and the architect was Nicholas Whyte. The five floors were open. I thought they should remain open. Despite being ruined inside, the building set conditions which could not be violated. Most of the building simply contains art. The little I've added to the building in reworking the interior is nevertheless to me very important, constituting serious ideas, architectural, but also the result and cause of some works of art. Now it must be the only loft building that remains a loft building in what used to be called the Cast Iron District, *Il Quartiere della Ghisa*. In 1973 and 1974 I bought a city block in a small town in West Texas because the block had two large buildings which were once airplane hangars, since moved. It also has a two-story building which contained offices. The large spaces are primarily for the installation of my work. There is a studio and a library. Since the city block was between the highway

and the railroad, I had an adobe wall built around it. This was an earlier idea from Rancho El Porvenir in Baja California, which has no structures, where the wall was intended to define the occupied space and to make a complex of various parts. Despite the indifference of the site in the town and the prosaic buildings, I've worked steadily to make a large considered complex, and, as such, it's the largest work I've made. I have a ranch fifty miles away upon and around one peak of the Chinati Mountains on which there are two houses that I've renovated. On the outskirts of the town, on what used to be Fort D.A. Russell, there is now the Chinati Foundation, Fundación Chinati, so far consisting mostly of my work, including fifteen concrete pieces extending a kilometer, supervised by Robert Kirk of Dallas. There are to be six large works by Dan Flavin. A building a block long in the center of town, which I renovated, contains the work of John Chamberlain. I also renovated a building, another hangar, which a rancher used as a horse arena, which we call the Arena. I built a courtyard at one end around an existing foundation. I designed the windows for two long buildings which contain 100 works of mine, and later the form, primarily the curve, of the corrugated iron roofs which were placed (incompetently) upon the buildings. The windows make an axis through the flat breadth of the buildings; the voluminous roofs make an axis through the length. Many works are in storage. For these I've planned a new complex of ten buildings, very open, 108 by 144 meters, without a wall, apparently on open range-land but actually on land that has been damaged by previous structures whose foundations remain. All ideas, seemingly simple and easy, are difficult for people to understand. One of the most difficult is the one of leaving the land alone: leave it alone or return it to its natural state. The natural world seems not to exist for almost everyone.

- 1 Ivan Grozny (1530–1584), commonly known as Ivan the Terrible, was the first tsar of Russia. Ivan's reign saw the completion of a centrally administered Russian state. Judd mentions Grozny again in his note from 6 April 1991. See this volume, 709.
- 2 Translates from the French as "Architecture is a plague in establishments of this kind!"

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